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Promos and Cassandra the heroine not only marries her violator, but saves him from the death he so richly deserved. Judged from modern standards, a satisfactory solution is found only in Shakespeare and in Juan de la Cueva.

It is by no means certain that either Giraldi's novel or *Epitia* was the immediate source of *El Degollado*, and it is therefore difficult to determine to what an extent the construction of the plot was the work of the Spanish dramatist. The play is interesting as one of the best composed in Spain in the period shortly before the appearance of Lope de Vega, and because of the analogy its plot offers to the theme of *Measure for Measure*.

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CHARLES DICKENS: HIS READING

The enormous amount of reading matter accessible to Dickens makes it impossible to be precise in regard to what he read, except when we have his own statements, or evidence of the direct influence of writers upon him, or the information of his personal friend and biographer, Forster. Dickens had a personal acquaintance with practically all the leading literary men of his time as well as many of the lesser lights, and hence must have known much about their works. He does not, however, mention any direct knowledge of the writings of many, and we are thus left to infer such knowledge according to the law of probability.

In one of his numerous letters to Wilkie Collins, Dickens has given a fairly accurate statement about his formal instruction. In it he says that he "was born at Portsmouth on the seventh of February, 1812; that my father was in the Naval Pay Office; that I was taken by him to Chatham when I was very young, and lived and was educated there till I was twelve or thirteen, I suppose; that I was then put to a school near London, where (as at other places) I distinguished myself like a brick."¹ This account, however, should be somewhat amplified and corrected. His mother

¹ *Letters of Charles Dickens*, edited by his sister-in-law and his oldest daughter, Chapman & Hall, London, 1882, two volumes, II, 43.

was his first teacher, and to her he owed an inestimable debt for arousing in him a desire to read. Forster states that "he has frequently been heard to say that his first desire for knowledge, and his earliest passion for reading, were awakened by his mother, who taught him the first rudiments not only of English, but also, a little later, of Latin. She taught him regularly every day for a long time, he was convinced thoroughly well."² His first actual school experience came when he attended a preparatory school at Rome Lane, Chatham. Then, from the age of seven to nine, he went to a school in Clover Lane, kept by William Giles, a Baptist minister. Giles evidently recognized that the youngster had ability, for later, while the *Pickwick Papers* were being published, he sent him a silver snuffbox inscribed to the "inimitable Boz." The family now went to London, and his father's financial straits and eventual imprisonment interfered with the education of Dickens from the age of ten to twelve; but from twelve to fourteen he attended "Wellington House Academy" at Hampstead Road, as a day scholar. At this time he was writing short tales which were circulated among the students and given dramatic representation by them. For a short time after this, he attended a school conducted by one Mr. Dawson in Henrietta Street, Brunswick Square. This closed his formal educational career, although he later learned to read and speak both French and Italian.

It was at Chatham, at the age of about nine, that Dickens first began the reading which had such great influence on his later work. The well-known passage in *David Copperfield* (Chap. iv) which describes David's reading is almost literally autobiographical. At this time Dickens read *Roderick Random*, *Peregrine Pickle*, *Humphrey Clinker*, *Tom Jones*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Arabian Nights*, and *Tales of the Genii*, also a few volumes of voyages and travels, of which he was always particularly fond. He not only read these books, but made himself forget the small troubles of boyhood by impersonating the characters in them. His ability for acting was thus happily fostered at a tender and impressive age. At about this time, he also read the *Spectator*, the *Tatler*, the *Idler*, the

² *The Life of Charles Dickens*, by John Forster, J. B. Lippincott & Co., Philadelphia, 1872, three volumes, I, 26.

Citizen of the World, and Mrs. Inchbald's *Collection of Farces*.³ At this time he also took rank as a youthful prodigy by writing *Misnar*, a tragedy founded on the *Tales of the Genii*. While his family was living in London, he, then about ten years old, borrowed from obliging friends the *Scottish Chiefs*, Holbein's *Dance of Death*, and Colman's *Broad Grins*, which "seized his fancy very much."⁴

Thus far the chronological development of his formal education has been traced, and, what is far more important, the kind of reading which he voluntarily indulged in while yet a little boy. From this point on, however, the chronology of his reading is too vague to be accurately determined, and it seems best to discuss the different types of literature that interested and influenced him.

It is, of course, the novel to which he owes most and which he most often mentions as a source of pleasure for reading, particularly the novels of the eighteenth century. He was very fond of Defoe, especially the *History of the Devil* and *Robinson Crusoe*; the thing which impressed him most in the latter book was that it had "nothing in it to make anyone laugh or cry."⁵ *Tom Jones* is one of the books already mentioned as having been dear to him in his youth, and there are also other references to Fielding. Of Smollett's work he liked *Humphrey Clinker* best, but thought *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle* "both extraordinarily good in their way."⁶ *Tristram Shandy* he knew too. He was not fond of Richardson, remarking that "he is no great favorite of mine."⁷ Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* was the most delightful of all stories to his mind. He also casually mentions his acquaintance with *The Castle of Otranto*.

There are references, moreover, in Forster's *Life* and in the *Letters* to many nineteenth century novelists. *Kenilworth* "I have just been reading with greater delight than ever,"⁸ he says; and he knew *A Legend of Montrose* and *Peveril*. George Eliot's *Scenes of Clerical Life* he speaks of as being one of "the best things I have seen since I began my course,"⁹ and remarks that he can never say enough of these stories because they are so ad-

³ Forster's *Life*, I, 34.

⁵ *Letters*, II, 48.

⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 183.

⁹ Forster's *Life*, II, 47.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 41.

⁶ *Letters*, I, 369.

⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 28.

mirable. His well-rounded knowledge of Thackeray's works is evident in his laudatory remark of "his refined knowledge of character, of his delightful playfulness as an essayist, of his quaint and touching ballads, of his mastery over the English Language."¹⁰ The work of Wilkie Collins he of course knew very well, and also that of Mrs. Gaskell. He writes her asking her to contribute to his forthcoming *Household Words*, and speaks of her *Mary Barton* as a "book that most profoundly affected and impressed me."¹¹ With Charles Reade's works he was also acquainted. There is mention of his interest in Italian and German novelists, and he knew some Russian novels as well. Of American novelists, he took special pleasure in Hawthorne's early tales. The first book which he put in Forster's hand, on his return from America was the *Mosses from an Old Manse*, and he urged Forster "with repeated injunctions to read it."¹² *The Scarlet Letter*, however, he criticised rather severely. He thought that there were many parts of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which were admirably done.

His interest in the drama, as shown by the writing of four plays and by his acting, was very keen. His works contain many references to characters and scenes in Shakespeare's plays, and his admiration for him is expressed in a letter from America to Forster: "I continually carry in my great-coat the *Shakespeare* you bought for me in Liverpool. What an unspeakable source of delight that book is to me!"¹³ His excellent acting of the part of Bobadil is sufficient testimony to a thorough knowledge of at least one of Ben Jonson's plays. He says of *She Stoops to Conquer* and the *Good-natured Man* that they "are so admirable and so delightfully written that they read wonderfully."¹⁴ *The Blot on the 'Scutcheon* he was very enthusiastic about and eager that Macready should play it.

Other forms of literature appealed to him more or less strongly. Poetry as a whole does not seem to have interested him to any great extent. For Wordsworth he had little love, but he was very fond of the *Bridge of Sighs*, doubtless because of his humanitarian instincts; and he was charmed with Tennyson's *Idylls*, because he thought they were so well written. He had a particular

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, III, 299.

¹² Forster's *Life*, II, 440.

¹⁴ *Letters*, I, 390.

¹¹ *Letters*, I, 233.

¹³ *Ibid.*, I, 355.

love for books of travel. During the summer of 1851, his reading "took in all the minor tales as well as the plays of Voltaire, several of the novels (old favorites with him) of Paul de Kock, Ruskin's *Lamps of Architecture*, and a surprising number of books of African and other travel for which he had an insatiable relish."¹⁵ Biography was another favorite study for him. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* he frequently mentions, of course to the credit of Johnson and to the discredit of Boswell. Charles Knight's *Biography of Shakespeare*, Forster's *Life of Goldsmith*, and Barry Cornwall's *Life of Lamb* are works of which he speaks with special praise.

Certain other authors may be mentioned here, whose works as a whole have defied classification in the above divisions. At the head of the list is Carlyle. "I would at all times go farther to see Carlyle than any man alive,"¹⁶ said Dickens. And Forster states that admiration for Carlyle "increased in him with his years; and there was no one whom in later life he honored so much or had a more profound regard for."¹⁷ The *French Revolution* he read "for the 500th time,"¹⁸ and the result of the reading is seen in the *Tale of Two Cities*, where, in such chapters as *The Grindstone* and in many other places, there can be little doubt that he had Carlyle in mind, consciously or unconsciously, as he wrote. He thought that Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* were among the most charming and profound productions that he had ever read. The *Spectator* of Addison and Steele he liked for the humorous papers, and thought that they were about as delightful as the serious papers were indifferent.

Two more subjects remain to be considered: the Bible and the classics. In regard to the Bible, even the casual reader of Dickens is aware that its ideas and phraseology are in constant evidence in his work. With the classics, however, the case is different. Dickens, too, knew "small Latin and less Greek." It has been pointed out that his mother taught him Latin, and he may have reached as far as Virgil in his study of it. But anything approaching classic restraint was foreign to his innermost feelings. The classic motto, "Nothing in excess" is as little true of him, perhaps, as of any romantic writer; for in Dickens practically everything is in excess and restraint is virtually unknown. He

¹⁵ Forster's *Life*, II, 439-440.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 520.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 334.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 440.

wore his "heart on his sleeve" if ever a man did, and cared more for one London waif than for the whole tribe of gods and goddesses of antiquity.

As was stated in the first paragraph of this article, it is impossible to make definite statements as to the exact nature of the bulk of Dickens' reading. The most important of his definitely known readings have been discussed above, and the list is perhaps rather suggestive than anything else. From the above material, scrappy and disjointed as it is in part, the fact is plain that he was an omnivorous reader of certain literary forms, particularly the novel, the drama, biography, and travel; and, to a lesser degree, of history, poetry, and economics. There is little indication that he was at all interested in science. Perhaps the greatest single influence that resulted in the humanitarian ideas so prevalent in his novels was Carlyle, whose bitter attacks on the existing social order are emulated again and again in the novels of Dickens. And perhaps, also, the greatest single influence on his art as a novelist was Smollett, whose method of depicting characters after the *comedy of humors* manner is common knowledge. It is evident that the books which Dickens is known to have read constitute but a comparatively small part of his whole reading; for he surely knew about the work of all the leading literary men of his day, with most of whom he was on terms of friendship. As editor, moreover, of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, he must have been acquainted with much of the work of many of the minor writers of that time. However, the first reading of his most impressionable years was luckily in the best of the novels of manners, the type to which the bulk of his own work is most closely akin.

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